

UNAPPROVED

There was a Cumberland School Committee Budget Workshop/Public Hearing held on Thursday, March 31, 2011 at 7:00 p.m., at the Cumberland High School Auditorium, 2600 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Members Present: Jeff Mutter, Lisa Beaulieu, Linda Teel, John Gibbons, Daniel Pedro, Erika Sanzi, Earl Wood

Staff Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed. D., Superintendent, Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration, Dr. Susan Carney, Asst. Superintendent, Alex Prignano, Business Manager

Agenda Item #1: Call to Order

Chairman Mutter called the meeting to order.

Agenda Item #2: Public Hearing/Discussion and/or Vote on FY2012 Budget – Chairman Mutter began the public hearing by stating that the necessary paperwork and cover letters from Administration needs to be in the Mayor's office by April 4, 2011, so to be compliant with that the SC needs a vote this evening to get all the necessary paperwork to the Mayor on time. Mr. Wood then stated that the Fiscal Management Sub Committee has met two previous times regarding the budget. The first meeting was a presentation of the budget and the second meeting discussed options to reduce the

\$460,000 deficit. One of the options discussed was the reorganization of the elementary schools – administration savings of about \$380,000, another option is the healthcare negotiation, which could be about \$100,000 in savings – these two options could close the budget deficit. Another option is to ask for the tax levy and ask for the \$362,000 and that along with the healthcare savings could be another option to close the budget deficit. Mr. Wood would like to propose these two options to the full committee for discussion. He also said they could review other proposals that may be out there.

Mr. Mutter then wanted to give everyone an overview of the budget which is currently at \$52,938,979 and on the revenue side of this budget there is \$1.3m of one time revenue sources (these sources will not be there next year), it also has an expense hole of \$460,515 that needs to be closed and that is if you receive \$1.0m of taxpayers support - that is included in this budget – we are asking the Mayor and the Town Council for this \$1.0m and we are still \$460,000 in the hole. Mr. Mutter feels that when all is said and done, we will be facing these issues again next year.

At this point Mr. Mutter reviewed a proposal that he just received on Monday – he did review this during the fiscal management meeting on Tuesday, he said he realizes that this proposal is late, but also noted that he just received it on Monday, he was not holding it. So on the revenue side of the budget based on a potential space sharing concept at B. F. Norton, there would be a revenue line addition of \$222,000, and they would be asking the town for the maintenance of effort reduction which would be \$362,195, so there would be

reductions in this budget of \$584,195 – which would leave (based on the \$460,000 hole in the budget) \$123,680. With this money the plan would be to designate it to a high-end learner start-up at grades 5-8. Then the reduction in the health care of \$167,000 that would be expensed for math coaches. These items would balance the budget at \$53,169,079.

At this point Mr. Mutter opened up the meeting to the SC for discussion. Mr. Wood noted that based on information from NESDEC and Administration that we would be looking at a \$380,000 savings regarding the elementary reorganization. Mr. Mutter told Mr. Wood that the Special Programs Sub Committee turned down that initiative, but Mr. Wood said that was not his understanding – he thought the Special Programs Committee was waiting for the budget to come out – but Mr. Mutter said that the sub committee voted no. Mr. Mutter told Mr. Wood that he could make any budget amendment that he would like to tonight – so he could put this reorganization option back on the table. Mr. Gibbons asked Dr. Morelle to review a briefing from Paula Maloney – Principal of B. F. Norton School – regarding the sharing of space with Blackstone Valley Prep and at this point Mr. Mutter noted that a walk-thru at the school was denied for the time that they requested and was approved at a different time with the proper personnel on hand, Mr. Mutter reiterated that he thought it would be a good idea to get both principals and other personnel together to see if this even had a chance of getting on the docket. Dr. Morelle was then asked by Mr. Mutter if she denied the walk-thru with the principal and B.V. Prep and her response was that she would be

working with Mrs. Maloney and that there would be walk-thru on Thursday with Mrs. Maloney and if she and the superintendent required more information, then the superintendent would contact the rep from B.V. Prep – Dr. Morelle noted that as the superintendent she had established a method to follow-thru on Tuesday nights meeting and there were several activities and phone calls on Wednesday morning in the office and the superintendent noted that she had the responsibility and right to make these judgment calls. At this point Dr. Morelle answered Mr. Gibbons question regarding Mrs. Maloney's review – Dr. Morelle said it was about three pages long, it was a response to the facts of the proposal, the requests for the core classrooms, the support spaces which are office spaces, parking and availability on weekends, etc. Dr. Morelle, Dr. Carney and Mrs. Maloney assessed the available space in the building now and what that projected space would look like in the upcoming school year. Mrs. Maloney reports that they would likely allow for four classrooms in the building – intentionally located on the top floor – so the delivery of curriculum and instruction may have to be modified and Dr. Morelle said at this point her initial reaction would be that would not be advisable, there should be consistency and uniformity as to how curriculum is delivered. She went on to say that the rooms identified on the top floor and other rooms throughout the building that would be impacted, were currently used for support services, like for Special Education, inclusion services, pullout services, etc. Also, Mrs. Maloney noted that based on NESDEC's proposal there could be a parking problem. Mr. Mutter stated that there are a lot of good

things going on at B.F. Norton and no one wants to interfere with that and Dr. Morelle noted that everyone is taking this proposal very seriously and she said she would not be a roadblock. She went on to say that Mrs. Maloney has met with faculty for an informational meeting – she also took this very seriously, and the superintendent said that something like this does not get flushed out in 48 hours. Mr. Wood then stated that he is all for renting out our buildings, but there are a lot of unanswered questions that need to be addressed and he also mentioned that if there is space at the school, we should be taking care of our own children in the district because Cumberland Hill is at capacity and some of those kids get bussed out. Mr. Mutter reiterated that he followed proper protocol, followed the organizational chart and brought it to the committee – it is their decision to either continue it, if they think it has merit or just say no. He wanted to make it perfectly clear that he did what he had to do by bringing this proposal to the full committee. Both Mr. Mutter and Mr. Wood went back and forth regarding neighborhood schools and then referred to proficiency at the high school, both agreed that they are concerned about both, but still have budget issues. Mr. Wood said that at Tuesday nights meeting he had asked Dr. Morelle and Mr. Prignano about the savings for the paired schools and they told him it would be about \$380,000 – so there is savings there. Mr. Wood said that we are currently paying teachers extra money to teach in the classrooms where there are extra children (due to contract) and we are bussing the students on two different busses. Mr. Wood said that he did not remember the reorganization coming to the committee for

a vote - he was under the impression that it was still on the table, but he is being told otherwise. Mrs. Sanzi stated that both Mrs. Maloney and Mr. Chiappetta (the executive director of the charter school in town) are both advocates for the students and she said she was very disappointed that they could not walk through the building together. Mrs. Sanzi noted that in 2002 B.F. Norton had 464 students and now in 2010 the school has 266 students. Mrs. Sanzi went on to say that the NESDEC study (reorganization) showed B.F. Norton at having 470 students – so she thinks there is going to be a space problem if they go with the Administration recommendation as well. Mr. Wood said that that information was not from Administration – it was from the study that was done. Mr. Mutter said that NESDEC provided options and did not recommend any of the options. Mr. Gibbons said that he still has some questions and concerns about the proposal with B. V. Prep. He is concerned about age discrepancy; students in uniforms, different school philosophies, different start and end times. The other option that they are looking at is the paired schools option and Mr. Gibbons said that he understands how much uneasiness this has brought about and then there is the discussion about the full day kindergarten – and he wonders if this will come off the board because of the additional space that will be needed in town. He also mentioned that Lincoln only had a few students sign up for the kindergarten at the Prep because of the full day kindergarten in town-which makes you wonder if parents are sending their kids to Prep because of a better education or because of less daycare problems. Mr. Gibbons has several concerns about the B.V. Prep

proposal – he said he would have a very hard time making a decision on any of the options. Mr. Mutter reiterated that he just wants the appropriate people to review the proposal and see if it has any merit, he also said that if they choose the reorganization, he just doesn't want the kids to be bussed around town – he wants it to work. Mr. Gibbons said his concerns with the reorg is the fact that it is a redistricting across town – it will effect all five elementary schools – and he said that with what happened earlier in the year with the bus issues, he wonders what could happen when all these kids are being bussed across town to a different school. Mrs. Teel commented about the B.V. Prep proposal and wanted to make sure that the proper individuals get to do the walk-thru and also she went on to say that she thinks that ultimately we will have to reorganize our elementary schools, but does not think that this is the time – due to the fact that we will be getting a new superintendent – she said she would be in favor of looking into the lease sharing at B.F. Norton. Mrs. Beaulieu thinks that we have three options, we can take a lease share for one year, take a reorganization, which will give us some savings – but impact every elementary school family, or we can cut – we have done this in the past and we always say that in addition, we need to find new revenue sources. She said that everyone has done a wonderful job with what they have had to work with, but we need to be competitive – the charter school will double its capacity in five years – its elementary program will be at about 220 students – which will make it a fully operational, fully existing competitive school system. Mr. Pedro said he is not in love with any of the ideas on the table –

reorg – some good some bad – lease option – they can look into it, need lots more information, but if it works for them – great – it would be for one year and then can be revisited, where the reorg is a permanent fix. Two other issues with the budget that Mr. Pedro has is why the reduction with librarians at the middle school – more technology needs more support – Dr. Morelle stated that there was some reallocation of staff – there is no new money in the budget – it goes by highest priority – but she believes that the staff at the middle school will meet the needs – it was not an easy decision. Mr. Pedro was also concerned about the music program – he thinks they reduced the staff by one fte, and so he asked if the committee could reinstate that position and hopefully reimplement the band and chorus program at the middle school – this would be depending on the status of the budget. Dr. Morelle said that there were no programmatic changes in the music program – but she does not believe the discrepancy is a full fte. Mr. Mutter said if the committee does put in the one fte position and then doesn't need it, they could always take it out.

Mr. Mutter said because it is a public hearing, he asked if there were any individuals in the audience that wanted to speak on any of these line items. Reading Specialist Deb R. from B.F. Norton was the first speaker – she shared testing results and some statistics about B.F. Norton and stressed how good this school is doing and how it has been recognized by RIDE and it should be referred to as an important jewel in the school system. The staff works tirelessly – she said their lives consist of teaching and learning. She believes that bringing

charter students to BFN would be a direct hit to BFN. She said in the past 10 years charter schools have been funded by foundations, etc., public schools provide a free education to any student anytime during the school year. She believes that if this proposal passes it will hinder the momentum at the school – she urged the committee to support public education.

Melinda Acosta – parent of two BFN students – she understands the burden of the budget but does not want one school to carry the burden. She is also concerned about having older students near the younger students – also near special needs students. Ellen C. – 3rd grade at BFN – does not think this should be a vote tonight – too many questions, concerns. How will this educationally benefit the students at BFN? She noted that two years ago BFN had to make room for the preschoolers, now you are asking them to make room for 200 more children – if the charter school needs extra space, she would like them to look elsewhere. At this point Mr. Pedro left the building (8:25 p.m.). Jeannie G. – parent at B.F. Norton, said that it did feel like the proposal was slipped in, it effects the students at BFN and that is why other community members think it is a good idea – it is not happening in their school. She stated that they reorganized for the pre-school, they rent out space for the after school program, there are parking issues, and now there may be 200 extra students. She doesn't think that the rest of the town is supportive and she said that their students are great students, they are good kids, and this is due to good teachers. Even though it is only one year, it does disrupt everyone and it does affect all of us and it is very upsetting – it is not

right! Jeremy Chiappetta – Executive Director of B.V. Prep – here to present and partner with Cumberland – they have been working with Cumberland for over two years and have been sharing services as well. He does not want to take anything away from BFN – he has heard great things about the school and about Mrs. Maloney. He said about one third of their students come from Cumberland. Lots of schools share space and it works well, it can be done. He would like to share best practices with Mrs. Maloney. Mr. Chiappetta also said that he would be available for questions at any time. Ms. Reid – she thinks that all the comments about the progress at BFN should be taken seriously and she is concerned about the fact that if the reorg takes place that half of the teachers at BFN will be placed elsewhere – thus breaking up this “family” which is doing so well. She would like the committee to do some careful planning; she wants them to do it right, not fast. She wondered if the proposal would be an opportunity or if it could make a difference. Mr. McGee – Cumberland parent – first grader at B.V. Prep, and a Cumberland Hill student, runs the Mayoral Academy. He told the committee that it would be a one-year lease and that they are currently looking for long-term solutions for their facilities. He also stated that out of the 200 students that may share space at BFN, 100 of them are fifth graders, just like the fifth graders that are currently at BFN. Mr. McGee went on to say that he has great admiration for Mrs. Maloney and thinks that the whole team is great at BFN. He hopes that Mrs. Maloney and Mr. Chiappetta could get together to discuss more about this proposal. Mr. McGee went on to say that they are looking at buying the old Central

Grammar School here in Cumberland and are also looking at renting space at Ann & Hope – these are neighborhood revitalization projects and in some cases are long-term solutions.

Norma – President of the Band Boosters – very concerned about the music program – she feels as though it is going to crash. She feels this will affect the program in the high school and she feels like they are losing the students. She would like the SC to reinstitute a quality program. Rep. McLaughlin – said he would like the SC to try real hard to keep the kids and BFN in tact – do whatever they can and if he can do anything to help them, he will. Tina M. – former teacher – stated that transitions have negative impact on students – she that every time you ask student to move to a different school, you lose them. She asked the SC to please make sure that they make the best decision for the students – we have good teachers and we should be leaders in the state. Mr. Mutter said it is all about student proficiency and they are trying the best they can. He also noted that this closes the public comment portion of the hearing. At this point Mr. Pedro returned – 8:45 p.m. Mr. Gibbons said that this is extremely difficult and although he wants to send the budget to the Mayor in a timely fashion, he would like to pursue the additional dollars – the levy (\$362,000) and then maybe health plan savings and then maybe continue discussions on the B.V. Prep proposal and also the reorg – he feels that this will give us options – this was Mr. Gibbons recommendation. Mr. Mutter said that the levy will not be voted on until late April and again a vote to place shared space in the budget does not obligate - we will have to make another decision. Also

noted was that the Cops Grant would be part of FY11. Mr. Wood noted that he has represented Cumberland Hill for 12 years and he has seen several things happen over the years, like within two weeks of a budget we closed the annex to save \$300,000 and we did that in a two-week period. The reorg is not something that has just come up – we have analyzed that –have had several meetings about it, and we have overcrowded condition in the northern part of town – we have space available – Mr. Wood said he sees that as an option. He wants the option of asking for the levy. Mr. Wood is not ready to make a commitment to the B.V. Prep proposal – he needs more answers. Mrs. Sanzi wanted to point out that B. F. Norton is being looked at because it has space and she thinks that good things could come out of the collaboration. Mr. Mutter said that the committee can have a budget amendment to increase revenue by \$222,000 under a line item that says B.V. Prep Lease Sharing-subject to many factors, expense side FY11 levy FY12 expense reduction (MOE) in the amount of \$362,195, these two moves would provide \$584,195, you could reduce the \$460,000 and you would be left with \$123,680, so the motion on the expense side would be to add a grade 5-8 high end learner line item then reduction in health care line item \$167,000 and increase in expense for the same amount for math coaches. That would balance the budget at \$53,160,979 and would leave Mr. Pedro's request for the one FTE to be added to the budget (SC can later remove this if necessary).

Mrs. Sanzi made a motion to take the entire package, but Mr. Mutter checked with Mr. Prignano to see if that could be done or if it has to

be revenues then expenses, and Dr. Morelle said that typically it has been done that way – both sides then the overall budget number and then once all the amendments have been made there is a final vote. Mrs. Sanzi then made a motion to add a line item on the revenue side for \$222,000 for the B.V. Prep Lease Sharing, 2nd Mrs. Teel, Mr. Wood and Mr. Gibbons have strong feelings about this proposal being rushed into the budget – they both feel that there are several things that need to be addressed, they both agree that it is just as easy to put it in later. Dr. Morelle said that it is the committees prerogative to adopt a budget tonight and the Administration has brought forth a budget, but there have been staffing requests made by building principals to operate their buildings and advance student learning and we were not able to incorporate them into the budget – the music position was not a consideration at any time, and the math coach was considered, but one FTE will not impact the programming – if she knew there were going to be additional funds available she thinks we could have come to consensus, instead of putting in a stipend for a retired administrator to provide administrative support at Community, the recommendation would have been for a .5 FTE or more, and certainly other considerations for the other requests that were made and maybe the cutbacks would have been less – so there are other personnel issues that will remain unresolved. Mr. Pedro was back in the building at 8:45 p.m. So after discussion the motion was approved 5-2 and the voting was as follows: Teel – yes, Beaulieu – yes, Sanzi – yes, Wood – no, Gibbons – no, Mutter – yes, Pedro – yes. On the expense side, Mrs. Beaulieu made a motion to add a place

holder FY11 levy FY12 expense reduction in the amount of \$362,195, 2nd Mr. Gibbons, approved 6-1, voting as follows: Sanzi – yes, Wood – no, Gibbons – yes, Beaulieu – yes, Teel – yes, Pedro – yes, Mutter – yes. Next, Mr. Mutter said would be the addition of grades 5-8 high end learner in the amount of \$123,680, Mrs. Beaulieu made a motion to approve, 2nd Mrs. Teel, approved 7-0. Mr. Mutter said the next line item would be a health care reduction in the amount of \$167,000 which would bring that total to \$6,050,100, Mrs. Beaulieu made a motion to move this amendment to the expense line, 2nd Mrs. Sanzi, approved 7-0. Next, add a line on the expense side under math coaches for the amount of \$167,000, Mrs. Beaulieu made a motion for passage, 2nd Mrs. Sanzi, approved 7-0. At this point in time Mr. Mutter stated that the expense side would be at \$53,169,079 and before he would take a motion, he said that Mr. Pedro made a request for one FTE in the amount of \$60,412, but before this could be done, a line item or any combination of line items had to be reduced by this amount. Mr. Mutter then noted that the motion would be to split the \$60,412 between the dental line item and certified retirement. Mr. Mutter said the motion is to add a line item for a music teacher and funding it with expense reductions of \$30,206 to dental plan and certified retirement in the same amount – Mr. Pedro moves passage, 2nd Mr. Wood, Mr. Prignano said that as the year goes on, if he sees any other practical solutions to take the money from – he will bring it to the school committee for their review, also final reconciliation of the budget may not call for these reductions and Mr. Mutter noted that if the math coaches don't survive, then the money can come from

that line item, after discussion was over the vote was taken and the motion was approved 6-1, Mrs. Teel voted no. Next, Mr. Mutter needs a motion to approve the FY12 budget in the amount of \$53,160,979 with stipulations that have been mentioned previously about a meeting with B.F. Norton professionals and B.V. Prep and subject to a bond council opinion on the financing arrangement – at this point Mr. Rotella said that when you are putting in bond council you should put in any other contingencies that may arise as a result of the charter school law and Department of Education because Mr. Rotella thinks that some of the actions and items will need to be vetted through the Department of Education as a result of the charter law. Mr. Mutter noted that what Mr. Rotella just stated is also a part of the motion. Mr. Rotella went on to say that he believes that the committee wants the administration to vet this out and that there is at least one meeting that you would like the administration to do, but he believes that Dr. Morelle is looking at more than one meeting to vet the entire issue. Mr. Mutter agreed and said that this would be the minimum and the other requirements would be subject to a majority vote. Mr. Wood wanted to know if the SC was asking the Administration to look into ways to work out the lease and Mr. Mutter said no, that they were looking for a discussion among the professionals and the other legalities involved in the potential move – there is no way this will happen without a majority vote. So, again Mr. Mutter said there is a motion to approve the FY12 Cumberland School Department budget in the amount of \$53,160,979, roll call vote as follows: Teel – yes, Beaulieu – yes, Sanzi – yes, Wood – yes, Pedro – yes, Gibbons – yes,

Mutter – yes, approved 7-0.

Agenda Item #3: Public Comment

Rep. McLaughlin – commented that there is not enough classroom space at B.F. Norton, and he said that if they need more information they could contact Principal Maloney. Kim Smallin – she asked what was going to happen to the pre-school, if the principal is going then where is the pre-school going? She said it is a great pre-school – not enough is said about it! She wants to know if the SC believes there will be enough space there for the pre-school and the B.V. Prep. Mr. Mutter said that they really don't know if there is enough space there or not, lots of unanswered questions, and he wanted to reiterate that everyone is very proud of B.F. Norton and this has to be in the best interest of everyone. At this point Dr. Morelle commented about the two full time administrators at B. F. Norton (comment made that the pre-school principal is going) and basically she said she gave her word to the committee that at the point that there was significant progress at B. F. Norton, that we would consider giving the principal at B.F. Norton the additional responsibilities of overseeing parts of the pre-school program and since that has happened at this particular time we did make a modification in the budget to the one administrator but are holding on to half of her role as Child Outreach Director – so there would still be some oversight in the program based on some of those responsibilities. Mr. Mutter said that there is a long way to go and he told the audience that a minimum of four people would come up with a decision that they think is in the best

interest of the students in Cumberland.

Agenda Item #4: Adjourn

Mrs. Beaulieu made a motion to adjourn, 2nd Mrs. Sanzi, approved 7-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony